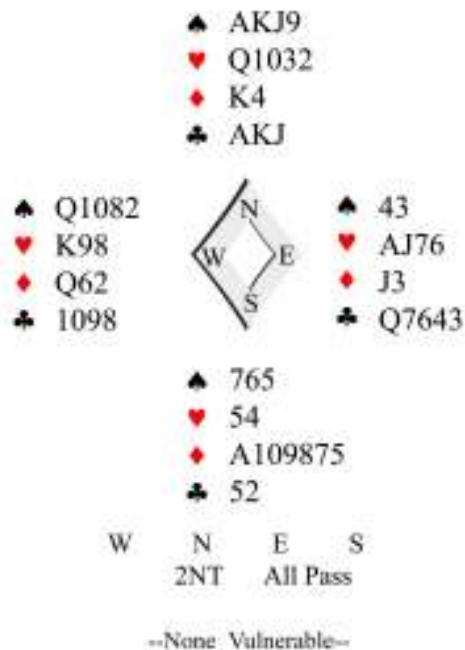


28. Responding to two notrump with a six-card minor

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The bidding:

With a balanced 21 HCP's, North opens 2 NT. South has four points and a six-card suit. As seen in last week's column, this was enough for a major suit game. However, with diamonds as trump, North will have entries to South's hand, but in notrump, there are no outside entries. It is most likely that the diamond suit is 6-2-3-2, but it is twice as likely that opponents will have the three cards and not the declarer.

South must pass and let North battle it out in 2 NT.

The opening lead:

East has a choice between a five-card suit with two high card points or a four-card suit with five high card points. East has no entries outside these two suits. It is not too likely that hearts will afford enough entries to set up clubs or vice versa because hearts or clubs are not likely to be the first suits declarer attacks.

East leads the six of hearts.

The play:

West wins the king of hearts and plays the nine of hearts. Declarer covers with the ten and East wins the jack. He then plays the ace, discovering that North has the winning queen left. East chooses to exit a heart to declarer's queen. This play is necessary because the defense does not want to give declarer, with limited entries to the dummy, a free finesse in another suit.

Declarer plays a small diamond to the ace, keeping the king to stop the opponents from cashing the queen or jack or both. The ace is his only entry to the dummy, and spades is the best suit to attack. He plays to the jack of spades which holds.

It would be nice if East could be thrown-in to lead clubs, but that can't happen.

All declarer can do is to throw West in with the fourth spade. West plays a club. North takes the losing finesse, wins the club return and claims eight tricks.

The result:

North loses the queen of clubs, three hearts and the queen of spades.

2 NT makes for +120.